

# Two in Three (65%) Torontonians Support Repealing Toronto Land Transfer Tax

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## **Two in Three (65%) Torontonians Support Repealing Toronto Land Transfer Tax**

**Toronto, ON** - Two in Three (65%) Torontonians 'support' (29% strongly/36% somewhat) Mayor Rob Ford's plan to repeal the Toronto Land Transfer Tax, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Toronto Real Estate Board. Conversely, just one in three (35%) 'oppose' (14% strongly/21% somewhat) repealing the Land Transfer Tax.

In 2008, the City of Toronto began charging a municipal Land Transfer Tax on homebuyers when they purchase a home, in addition to the provincial land transfer tax charged by the Province. For the average Toronto homebuyer, the Toronto Land Transfer Tax amounts to about \$6,000 payable in full when a home is purchased. Mayor Rob Ford's election platform included a commitment to repeal the Toronto Land Transfer Tax, and he has publicly reaffirmed this commitment since being elected. However, to date, there has been no plan in the Toronto City budget to repeal the tax.

Reflecting on many of the steps that the City has taken to reduce its budget deficit of over \$700M, including a review of services, directing City officials to find savings of 10 percent within each department, considering increases to City user fees, reductions to City staff and contracting out garbage collection for some parts of the city, even in light of the City's current fiscal situation six in ten (57%) believe that Rob Ford should follow-through on his intention to repeal the Land Transfer Tax. Just four in ten (43%) believe that the tax should be kept.

The collective bargaining agreements that the City currently has with its unionized employees are set to expire at the end of this year. The City has said that it faces significant fiscal challenges and that it needs to make changes to its collective agreements to reflect the

city's fiscal reality. During negotiations for new collective agreements, two in three (67%) Torontonians believe that City officials should seek concessions from unions on things like wages, benefits and job security. One in three (33%) do not believe these types of concessions should be sought.

Specifically with regards to job security, the current collective agreement between the City and its unionized employees includes provisions requiring that if an employee's position is terminated, for reasons such as contracting out, technology change, or deletion of the position, the City must provide the affected employee with another job somewhere else in the City. A majority (57%) believes that City officials should negotiate and end to this job security provision, while four in ten (43%) do not believe that City negotiators should seek and end to this provision.

During negotiations for new collective agreements with City employees, the City could engage in a pre-emptive "lock-out", preventing unionized workers from getting to work and performing their jobs. This would likely result in a significant disruption to city services and programs while the negotiations continued, but could give the City a stronger bargaining position. A slim majority (54%) 'supports' (17% strongly/36% somewhat) the city 'locking-out its unionized employees if union bargaining officials do not agree to concessions, requested by city negotiators, on things like wages, benefits and job security'. Conversely, nearly half (46%) 'opposes' (25% strongly/21% somewhat) a pre-emptive lock-out.

The City of Toronto currently has the lowest residential property tax rate of all municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area. Thinking about whether the residential property tax rate in Toronto should be increased so that Toronto's residential property tax rate is in line with other GTA municipalities, which would help to eliminate the budget shortfall and increase service levels for City programs, a majority (53%) believes property tax rates in Toronto



should be raised (29% raise but keep lower than other GTA municipalities vs. 23% raise and make them in line with other municipalities), while nearly half (47%) say that property tax rates should be left where they are.

A majority (54%) of Torontonians believe that the money spent by the City on programs and services it delivers to the community is being spent in an 'efficient and cost-effective manner' (5% very/49% somewhat), up 9 points since April of 2011. Conversely, nearly half (46%) do not believe that City money is spent in an 'efficient and cost-effective manner' (13% not at all/33% not very), down 9 points.

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between November 17 and 22, 2011, on behalf the Toronto Real Estate Board. For this survey, a sample of 401 Torontonians from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 4.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Toronto been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.*

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